(a) whether Government are aware that Orissa is a drought-prone State and agriculture is the main stay of the economy;

(b) whether State's irrigation project Daijanalla (Major Irrigation Project) MIP is pending with the centre for clearance;

(c) whether Government are also aware that on completion, it would provide irrigation facilities to a vast area and provide relief to the drought-hit farmers of the State; and

(d) if so, the present status of the case?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) to (d) Yes Sir. Therefore, considering the importance of the project, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, have already granted and issued forestry clearance for diversion of 55.52 ha. of forest land under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect of Baijhanalla Minor Irrigation Project in Gajapati district of Orissa on 16-9-1994 itself. Also, this Ministry have granted forestry clearance for diversion of another 24.227 ha. of forest land in respect of Baijhanalla Minor Irrigation Project (Part-II) in Gajapati district of Orissa on 06.07.1998.

Pruning of trees

375. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Supreme Court has recently issued directions in the matter of pruning of trees, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government have evolved any policy for pruning of trees while setting up of a corridor through dense forests by power grid corporation and NTPC and other PSUs in future;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what prompted the Supreme Court to give such directions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) and (e) No Sir.

(b) to (d) No Sir. Pruning or felling of trees in National Parks/Sanctuary, are considered on case to case basis on merit.

Dolphin Population

376. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the highly endangered Dolphin population is facing a serious threat from mechanized boats used by tourists and others;

(b) if so, the latest Dolphin population figures and the comparative figures pertaining to the earlier censuses; and

(c) the steps aken and proposed to be taken to protect and promote this endangered species?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) While entanglement in the fishing nets, reduction of habitat and pollution are the major threats to dolphin populations, there are reports of serious adverse impact of mechanized boats used by tourists on dolphins.

(b) Although no systemic population survey for dolphins has been done so far but some population estimates are available. During late 1980s the population of Ganges river dolphin was estimated to be around 3000 to 4000, and, as per a recent survey conducted by World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) the population is between 1800 and 2000. Population estimate of Irrawaddy dolphin found in coastal waters of India is available only for Chilika lake in Orissa. While there were about 79 dolphins in Chilka lake in 1998, the present population estimate is around 60 dolphins.

(c) The steps taken to protect and promote dolphins include:

1. All the species of dolphins have been put in the Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 thereby providing the highest degree of protection under the law.

2. Protected Area network has been established in the country for conservation of dolphins.